

# AB 2231 – EMERGENCY ALERTS

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## Assemblymember Fran Pavley

### IN BRIEF

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Convenes a working group of state, federal and private industry stakeholders through the Office of Emergency Services to assess existing and future technologies available in the public and private sectors for the expansion of transmission of emergency alerts to the public through a public-private partnership.

The working group will design the platform of the protocols and guidelines necessary to implement an enhanced emergency alert system through a public-private partnership.

### THE ISSUE

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California is prone to the constant threat of disastrous floods, fires and earthquakes. The state levee system in declining disrepair, threatens many towns and cities to be the next New Orleans. Earthquakes have the potential to trigger a number of devastating after effects; tsunamis, fires and blackouts can all result in a potential loss of life.

Additionally, as the fifth largest economy in the world, the chance of a terrorist attack is a reality that many Californians face everyday. Since 9/11 it has become clear that terrorism is a constant threat.

With the awareness that disaster is not an *if* but a *when*-county, state and federal emergency agencies are assessing the efficiency of current emergency plans and ways to improve communications for future disasters. The Governor has stated “California is ready –but emergency preparedness is everyone’s responsibility. Families, businesses and schools must plan proactively.

### EXISTING LAW

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In California, the Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates the response of state agencies to support local governments during major disasters.

Currently, there is no state system in place that requires the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to directly alert residents of a statewide or regional disaster.

However, OES has a voluntary opt-in alert system that delivers all-level-statewide emergency alerts via email or wireless device for California residents. Recipients can receive up to 10 emergency alerts a day. While this system can provide an invaluable source of information, many participants have come to view the alerts as “spam,” as the

messages contain information that is not imperative to an emergency or state disaster.

### THE SOLUTION

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Public- private partnerships are the key to creating an effective, robust alert system. Both President Bush and Governor Schwarzenegger have issued Executive Declarations recognizing that efficient mobilization of government, private sector and nonprofit resources are critical to effectively prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

Private sector groups, including providers of mass communications systems have innovative technology that can disseminate emergency alerts in a disaster.

For example, text-messaging, a feature built-in to most wireless devices, can easily be used to alert mobile device users of an impending disaster.

Currently, OES sends out emergency warnings to media outlets, through the Emergency Digital Information Service (EDIS). Building upon this service, OES is in the process of developing a refined alert system. AB 2231 will provide the opportunity for private and public stakeholders to engage in this process to develop a more comprehensive and robust alert system to enable officials to reach large numbers of people through a variety of communications media.

### AUTHOR’S STATEMENT

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AB 2231 is a necessary step in the direction of enhancing the state’s ability to deliver emergency alerts to the public in the event of a disaster. AB 2231 coalesces representatives of public and private industry to design the platform for a public-private partnership that will enhance the current emergency alert system.

### SUPPORT

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California Professional Firefighters (co-sponsor)  
California State Firefighters Association (co-sponsor)  
Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, INC  
Riverside Sheriffs’ Association

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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